Guide for Assessment & Planning for Institutional Effectiveness

Richmond Community College

Office of Marketing and Strategic Planning
September 2022

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Richmond Community College (RichmondCC) Planning and Assessment System consists of five processes. These are Strategic Planning (5-10 years), annual campus-wide planning and curriculum program assessment, program-specific five-year program reviews, and the Quality Enhancement Plan.

Strategic Planning

Periodic Strategic Planning sets the direction for the institution and guides the college-wide planning. Periodic Long-Range Planning produces the Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Values Statement, and Strategic Directives with their associated institutional goals. Additionally, future benchmark goals are identified. Supporting plans such as the Institutional Planning and Assessment System are also identified as supporting the Strategic Plan.

Periodic Long-Range Planning provides the foundation for an integrated, institution-wide research-based planning and assessment system. Periodic Long-Range Planning is conducted by the Planning and Accountability Committee, with input and feedback from the Board of Trustees, Student Government Association, students, employees, and others as determined by the President of Richmond Community College. The Long-Range Planning Process begins with a comprehensive assessment of the needs of the institution and the community. It produces the Mission Statement, Vision & Values Statement, Strategic Directives, and related Goals.

All planning at RichmondCC begins with assessment and analysis. The ad hoc Long-Range Strategic Planning Cycle begins with a review of relevant existing documents (institutional as well as those of other influencing bodies to include, but not limited to, the North Carolina Community College System, governmental agencies, and accrediting or certifying bodies); analysis of all available data, information, evaluations both internal and external; and an environmental scan. Support to the ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee is provided by the Office of Marketing and Strategic Planning, leveraging existing data and information, where available, and collecting against committee requirements where data or information is not pre-existing. Where fiscally possible, assessments such as an environmental scan may be externally contracted. Planning Assumptions are agreed upon by the committee. Planning Assumptions are defined as a supposition or belief used in the planning process that, if no longer accurate at some point during the planning period, would require that the planning process be revisited. Planning assumptions should be minimized and include only those necessary for effective planning. Planning assumptions are probable but not certain, derived from environmental conditions through observation and studies, and apply to the planning period.

Based on this analysis, the ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee validates the existing Mission Statement or recommends a revised or alternative statement. Because it is fundamental to the rest of the process it is advisable to seek approval of revisions or changes to the Mission Statement from the Board of Trustees before proceeding further.

The most recent Long-Range Planning Process was completed in 2015. The mission statement, vision statement, strategic directives, and associated goals were designed were developed to guide the College through 2026 (collectively known as Richmond Community College Strategic Plan Vision 2026).

RichmondCC Strategic Plan Vision 2026 (the current mission, vision, and strategic directives with their associated goals) was developed and approved to continue through 2026. Board of Trustees Policy

mandates annual reviews and updates as required. By the President's request, Planning and Accountability Council's ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee prepared the RichmondCC Vision 2026 Strategic Plan. This document was created to establish measurable goals for the College and benchmarks to meet in three-year increments. The Leadership Team, along with the Board of Trustees, designs the implementation plan to meet the established benchmarks and goals.

The current RichmondCC Strategic Plan Vision 2026 is available on the RichmondCC website.

Mission Statement: Richmond Community College's mission is to offer educational opportunities, cultural enrichment, and workforce development and training that will enhance the quality of students' lives and support economic development in Richmond and Scotland counties.

Vision Statement: Through the talent and dedication of our employees, we will be the premiere community college in North Carolina. We will set the gold standard for student learning and services, driving the engine of economic development for Richmond and Scotland counties.

Values Statement: Richmond Community College values above all else:

- Our Students
- Our Employees
- Our Community

Our values are:

- **INTEGRITY** – Fairness and Honesty in All We Do
- **LEADERSHIP** - Inspiring Others to Succeed
- **DIVERSITY** - Of People And Ideas
- **TEAMWORK** - Achieving Our Goals Together
- **INNOVATION** - Never Settling for What Is
- **PERSEVERANCE** - Continuously Striving and Overcoming Adversity
- **EXCELLENCE** - Doing Our Best to Be the Best
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** - Ownership of Performance and Results

Strategic Directives:
A. Your Goals - Provide individualized approaches to student success

1. Develop a career plan with each student.
2. Implement support and services to assist students in meeting their goals and overcoming obstacles.

B. Your Career - Prepare students for rewarding careers and futures

1. Offer relevant programs in a variety of formats.
2. Partner with students to achieve their potential.

C. Your Community - Serve our local communities

1. Promote economic development, entrepreneurship, and job creation.
2. Cultivate cultural enrichment opportunities.

Annual Campus-Wide Administrative Planning & Curriculum Program Assessment

The planning and assessment process at Richmond Community College is ongoing, comprehensive, and critical to strategic planning. The planning or assessment cycle runs from July 1 to June 30. All areas of the College are categorized as either an "Administrative Unit" or "Program" for assessment purposes and all units and programs have their planning and assessment data on the institutional effectiveness software, Weave Education. Every Program and Unit Assessment and Improvement Plan identifies its annual assessment goals. Each outcome has a related measure and target. Assessment of the outcomes occurs throughout the year, and plans are updated with results and the use of results after every semester (assessment) or by the end of the planning cycle. Strategies to improve, or in some cases, Action plans may be developed to address areas in which improvement is noted or desired.
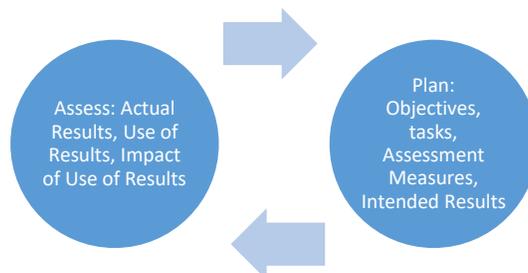
Annual Campus-Wide Administrative Planning

The annual campus-wide administrative planning is mission, strategic directives, and associated goals driven. Planning units create annual planning goals which consist of objectives, assessment measures, and intended results. At the end of the planning year, administrative planning units enter actual results and use of results, as well as attach any documentation, if applicable. Also, to finish "closing the loop" planning units should include the impact of use of results, which is recorded the year after, identified the impact (or improvement) that were identified from the strategies or interventions that were recorded on the use of results.

The Annual Planning Cycle fulfills two functions. The first function is at the institutional level by providing an annual systematic review of the Mission Statement, Vision Statement Strategic Directives, and Goals as well as an assessment and evaluation of institutional progress in accomplishing its mission. The second function is at the individual planning unit. During this function, the planning unit sets objectives and assesses those objectives to provide clear improvement plans for how the planning unit supports continuous improvement. The transition from one annual cycle to the next begins with assessment. The actual results analysis and the use of results, in most cases, are the basis for the new objectives/goals.

Planning units identify expected outcomes/objectives for all academic (or educational), administrative support services, academic or student support, or community/public support services units and/or programs. Results of those outcomes are assessed and are applied to improve programs and/or services for students in all areas of the college: the President's Office, Instruction (including curriculum/non-curriculum programs), Student Services, and Administration. Each area comprises various planning units that are applicable to the function of the area. Objectives are at the core of the RichmondCC Planning and Assessment System, which integrates short-term and long-term planning with evaluation and resource allocation into a cohesive system that promotes creativity and accountability. This systemic approach is dynamic and ongoing, with input sought from the College community towards its continual improvement.

Figure 1

The Annual Planning Cycle and development of Objectives (or expected outcomes) begins with the evaluation of the prior year's Actual Results. This takes place at all levels throughout the institution. While the Annual Planning Cycle provides milestones and checkpoints critical to *systematic planning and evaluation, assessment, evaluation, planning, and implementation of actions based on analysis of those assessments is a continuous process.* Where required or feasible, research-informed decisions are made, planned, and implemented at any time within the cycle.

The Periodic Long-Range and Annual planning are inextricably intertwined through the annual review and evaluation process, the Planning Priorities, linkage of planning units. Objectives to specific Strategic Directives and Goals, and common use of assessments and evaluations at all levels.

Curriculum Program Assessment

RichmondCC supports ongoing assessment for the continuous improvement of our initiatives, programs, and services. Our goal is to ensure a student-centered approach to assessment that uses the collection, analysis, and reporting using reliable data in service to our students and their success.

RichmondCC encourages everyone involved in the process to think critically about the assessment and to identify appropriate methods for gauging how well student learning outcomes have been met. Through data collection and analysis, evidence can then be used productively in showing strengths, as well as in creating plans of action for improvement and plans for future assessment.

Department Chairs/Program Coordinators are responsible for the facilitation of the assessment process. Normally, multiple student learning objectives are identified (with their associated assessment measures intended results), all to be assessed within three years timeframe; however, to ensure continuous improvement, occasional edits to the student learning outcomes may be necessary to ensure relevance.

At the end of the assessment year, academic programs enter actual results and use of results, as well as attach any documentation, if applicable. Also, to finish "closing the loop" planning units should include the impact of use of results, which is recorded the year after, identified the impact (or improvement) that were identified from the strategies or interventions that were recorded on the use of results. All academic assessment data should be entered into Weave Education.

Staff in the Office of Marketing & Strategic Planning are available to provide support at any phase of the assessment process.

Richmond Community College Student Learning Assessment Cycle
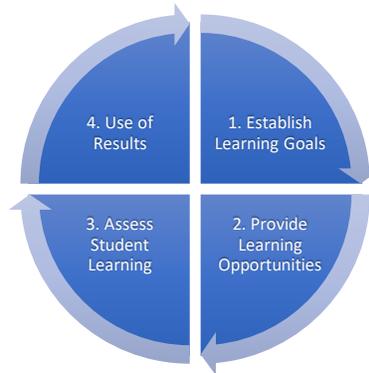
Figure 2

Figure 2 – Teaching, Learning, and Assessment as a Continuous Four-Step Cycle (Suskie, 2018)

Helpful Hints for Writing & Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

Creating student learning outcomes for an educational program is a process. Some programs have found the following steps to be helpful:

Step 1

Start by having a faculty/staff meeting and brainstorming about what an ideal graduate would know. Consult your syllabus for the required courses in your degree program (or programs within your student service area), indicating which of them will be covered in each course.

Step 2

Identify a list of outcomes, understanding that they may be revised several times before becoming definitive and that they may change over time to maintain relevance and the changing needs and characteristics of students.

Step 3.

Assess student learning by designing assignments specifically geared to measure achievement of each of the outcomes that are designated for each course of the degree, diploma, and/or certificate programs.

Step 4

Considering the assessment results, some departments may need to meet with faculty/staff at the end of each assessment period and revise the list of outcomes, teaching methods, curriculum, and/or program.

Step 5
Repeat the above steps regularly and as needed to improve student learning.

Important Annual Due Dates

Deliverables	Due Date
Administrative Planning Data for Fiscal Year – Actual Results and Use of Results	ASAP or by July 15th
Administrative Planning IMPACT OF USE OF RESULTS for the prior fiscal year – reporting the impact of the identified use of results to the next year's planning year.	November 15th
Student Learning Outcome Data (Fall Sections) – Actual Results and Use of Results	February 15th
Student Learning Outcome Data (Spring Sections) – Actual Results and Use of Results	July 15th
Student Learning Outcome IMPACT OF USE OF RESULTS for the prior academic year – reporting the impact of the identified use of results to the next year's cohort.	November 15th

***** See Key Definitions (Appendix C)**

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Note: Impact of Use of Results (both administrative planning units and curriculum assessment) —due November 15th each year for the previous year. For example, 2021-2022 impact statements will need to be entered into Weave by November 15, 2023. See "Key Definitions" for the definition of an Impact of Use of Results.

Program-Specific Five-Year Program Review

In addition to the annual planning assessment and action plan development, for-credit Instructional programs undergo a comprehensive formal Program Review every five years. Program outcomes/objectives are measured using sources such as graduation rates, retention rates, enrollment, employability, or student satisfaction. Supporting activities, such as hiring new faculty, professional development, and purchasing instructional equipment or software are identified and justified in direct

support of specific learning outcomes. Implementation of supporting activities helps make the outcome a reality, improve student learning, and/or improve a program's quality or effectiveness. Department Chairs are responsible for reviewing each program of study on at least a five-year rotating schedule for most programs and annually for most medically related programs. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). The template for Five Year Program Reviews is broken into nine sections:

1. Faculty
2. Program Matrix & Description
3. Student Learning & Curriculum
4. Enrollment Trend Analysis
5. Program Retention, Graduation, & Employment
6. Reflection & Action Plans
7. Accreditation / Licensing/Needs and Estimated Costs for Proposed Program Changes
8. Program Advisory Committee
9. General Impressions & Reflections

The portal for the program review is available on RichmondCC's intranet: **progrev.richmondcc.edu**. You may use your same RichmondCC network to login. If you are responsible for the program review, and need access, please contact the Office of Marketing and Strategic Planning.   Data for program review is available through SharePoint and by request through a help desk request (headcount, FTE, demographics, retention rates, graduation rates, etc.) by the Director of Institutional Research located within the Office of Marketing and Strategic Planning. Financial data is provided by the Controller in the Financial Services Division.

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

In accordance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges policy statement on the Quality Enhancement Plan:

The Compliance Certification is a document completed by the institution that demonstrates its judgment of the extent of its compliance with each of the Commission's Core Requirements and other standards. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducts the initial review of this document and presents preliminary findings to the institution and the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

The Quality Enhancement Plan is an integral component of the reaffirmation of accreditation process and is derived from an institution's ongoing comprehensive planning and evaluation processes. It reflects and affirms a commitment to enhancing overall institutional quality and effectiveness by focusing on an issue that the institution considers important to improving student learning outcomes and/or student success. The document submitted by the institution demonstrates that its QEP (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviews the document and conducts interviews to determine whether the institution has demonstrated compliance with Standard 7.2. (SACSCOC, 2022)

SACSCOC Standard 7.2: The institution has a QEP that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement. (Quality Enhancement Plan) (SACSCOC, The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, 2017)

SACSCOC Expectations

Institutional effectiveness is an area of the institution that is closely monitored in the reaffirmation of the accreditation process. According to SACSCOC (2017), "At the heart of SACSCOC's philosophy of accreditation, the concept of quality enhancement assumes that each member institution is engaged in the ongoing improvement of its programs and services and can demonstrate how well it fulfills its stated mission" (p. 4) (SACSCOC, The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, 2017).

The phrase "ongoing improvement" assumes that a college will continuously evaluate the effectiveness of its services and programs and then make changes based on the results of those assessments to provide the highest quality of education and support for its students, who deserve no less than our best. The SACSCOC standards related to institutional effectiveness are listed below.

- **7.1** – The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that
    - o focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and
    - o incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission.
- **7.2** – The institution has a QEP that
    - o has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes;
    - o has broad-based support of institutional constituencies;
    - o focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success;
    - o commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and
    - o includes a plan to assess achievement.
- **7.3** – The institution identifies the expected outcomes of its administrative support services and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved.
- **8.1** – The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success.
- **8.2** – The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:
    - Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.
    - Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.
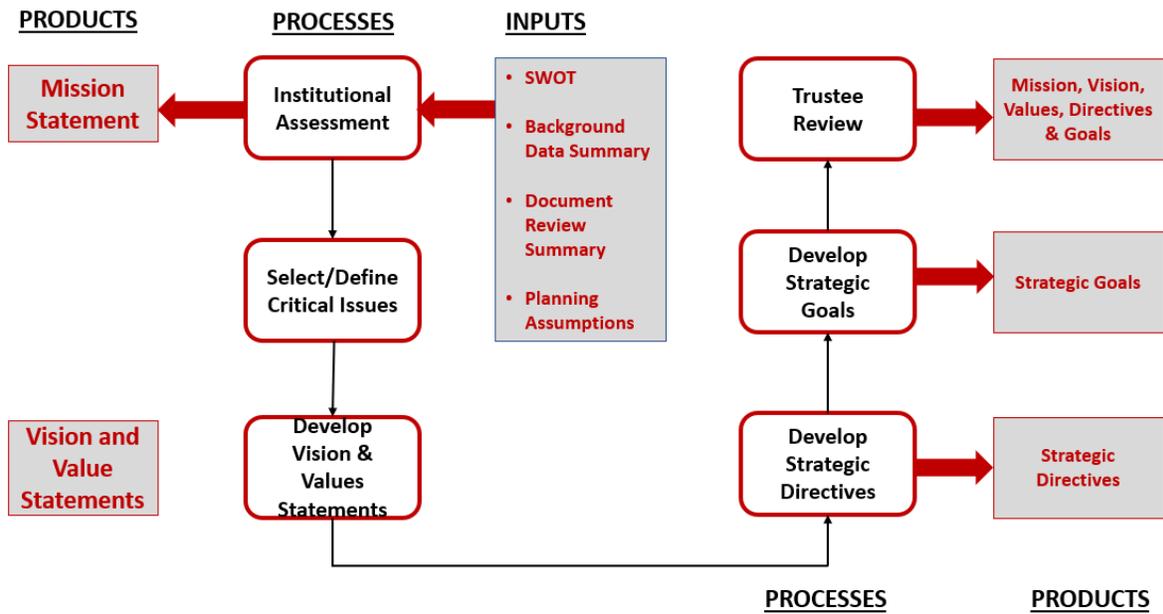
- Academic and student services that support student success.

(SACSCOC, The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, 2017)

Conclusion

The entire College engages in ongoing strategic planning as well as assessment of student achievement measures including the NCCCS Performance Measures and National Student Clearinghouse completion rates. Assessment is the responsibility of all areas of the institution to improve our service delivery, administrative operations, and learning experience for students, which should be at the top of our priority list. The Office of Marketing and Strategic Planning is always available to work with departments collectively or with individuals who have questions about the process.

Appendix A

The Long-Range Planning Process – Diagram

PRODUCTS **PROCESSES** **INPUTS**

- **SWOT**
- **Background Data Summary**
- **Document Review Summary**
- **Planning Assumptions**

Mission Statement ← **Institutional Assessment**

Institutional Assessment → **Select/Define Critical Issues**

Vision and Value Statements — **Develop Vision & Values Statements**

Trustee Review → **Mission, Vision, Values, Directives & Goals**

Develop Strategic Goals → **Strategic Goals**

Develop Strategic Directives → **Strategic Directives**

PROCESSES   **PRODUCTS**

Appendix B

Assessment Tools (Sources of Data)

Administrative Assessment

Administrative areas also have diverse methods of data collection to choose from based on specific outcomes. There are numerous methods of collecting data on services including the following:

- Surveys
- Interviews/focus groups
- Sign-in logs
- Audit findings
- Before and after reflection
- Be sure that the assessment method is specific to the outcome. Avoid over-surveying whenever possible. For example, consider including questions on a larger survey that is going out campus-wide rather than each unit sending its own, individual survey to the same population.

Course-level Assessment

Student learning outcomes are often assessed in individual courses. There are numerous methods of assessing student learning in a classroom setting; however, direct measures are required to assess student learning outcomes.

Examples of direct measures include

- Presentations
- Simulations
- Behavioral observations
- Written papers
- Test questions
- Locally developed exams
- Oral exams
- Student portfolios
- Standardized exams
- Consider using a rubric or other marking guide to provide guidance and consistency for multiple instructors. Be sure that the assessment measures the specific learning outcome. For example, a standardized certification exam might contain 50 questions, only 15 of which relate to a specific student learning outcome. Use student achievement only on those 15 questions when assessing the extent to which students achieved that outcome.

Also, to make your assessment stronger, you may use an indirect measure as a secondary assessment measure, Examples of indirect measures include (secondary assessment tools for student learning outcomes)

- Course evaluations
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Archival data

- Focus groups
- Grades
- Number of student hours spent on service learning

Performance Measures

The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) publishes performance measures annually that include basic skills student progress, student success in college-level English and math courses, first-year progress, college transfer performance, and others. As part of the assessment process, SACSCOC expects the College to identify thresholds of acceptability (minimum target) for these measures of student achievement. While these measures are not "student learning outcomes," they are metrics of student achievement which need to be monitored and evaluated by the institution and may be tracked as program outcomes for appropriate areas.

Since the strategic planning processes of all educational institutions can never be 100% perfect due to continuous change, occasional edits in the annual planning and assessment cycle may be necessary.

Appendix C
Key Definitions for Administrative Planning and/or Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

Actual Results: Reviewed annually after results are received and must be entered into Weave by the identified annual due dates for administrative assessment and student learning assessment.

Assessment refers to a continuous process instituted to understand and improve student learning. While academic units may find alternative pathways to arrive at this goal, this process needs to begin with an articulation of educational goals for all programs and courses. These goals should be expressed as measurable objectives followed by the selection of reliable and valid methods and direct measures. After collecting, interpreting, and sharing findings, the aim is to use these learning outcomes to better understand how and what students learn, and how well students are meeting expected objectives, as well as to develop strategies to improve the teaching and learning processes.

Assessment Measure: – The assessment tool that is used to assess the student learning outcome or planning objective is the general assessment approach used to measure whether students have achieved an outcome, such as a test or an assignment.

- o *Direct Measures* – Direct measures of student learning require students to display their knowledge and skills as they respond to the instrument itself. Tests, rubrics, essays, and classroom assignments all meet this criterion. (See assessment tools). In assessing academic student learning outcomes – always use direct measures.
- o *Indirect Assessment* – For assessing student learning outcomes, indirect assessment can be used as a secondary measure. Indirect assessments ask students to reflect on their learning rather than to demonstrate it. Techniques include external reviewers, student surveys, exit interviews, alumni surveys, employer surveys, and curriculum and syllabus analysis.

General Education Outcomes – Like the definition of the Student Learning Outcome where the program where general education components are assessed. The Director of General Education Outcomes facilitates the assessment.

Richmond Community College General Education Outcomes Assessment includes:

- o Communication (Oral and Written)
- o Quantitative Reasoning
- o Cultural Awareness
- o Critical Thinking
- o Information Literacy

Moreover, students who complete RichmondCC programs are expected to be able to understand the concepts in the outcomes after they graduate. Our programs, regardless of the major, are designed to enable our graduates to achieve the general education competencies.

Impact of Use of Results: To completely close the loop with administrative planning and student learning assessment, staff/faculty will enter the impact of use of results narrative the following planning/academic year into the improvement(s) achieved in Weave. Included should be a status report of whether or not strategies were implemented from the prior year's use of results and if these interventions were effective.

Student Learning Outcome (SLO) – An outcome that describes what a student is expected to learn as a result of participating in academic activities or experiences at the College. SLO focus on knowledge gained, skills and abilities acquired or demonstrated, and attitudes or values changed.

Target (Intended Results): Identified during annual administrative planning and student learning assessment. This is the measurable, target result that you wish to achieve. **MUST** be measurable.
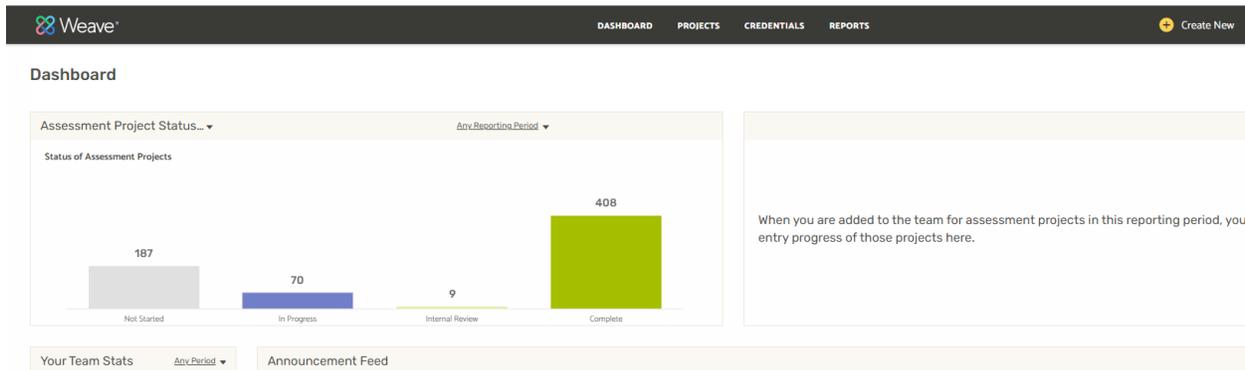
Use of Results: Entered annually after actual results are received/reviewed and must be entered into Weave by the identified annual due dates for administrative assessment and student learning assessment. Include an analysis of what the actual results mean (outlined in blue); write a description of what the plan is to improve (or maintain) future outcomes, describe data trends, etc.

Appendix D

Weave Education

Weave Education is the Institutional Effectiveness software that is used to record planning and assessment data. To access the software, please go to:

app.weaveeducation.com/login/rcc

You sign-on using the same password that you use for the Richmond Community College network.

If you are responsible for entering planning and assessment data, and do not have access to Weave, please contact the Office of Marketing and Strategic Planning.

References

SACSCOC. (2017, December). *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement.* Retrieved from Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges: https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf

SACSCOC. (2022, August). *Quality Enhancement Plan Policy Statement.* Retrieved from Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges: https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/Quality-Enhancement-Plan-1.pdf

Suskie, L. (2018). *Assessing Student Learning Outcomes: A Common Sense Guide.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.